



VOL. 10 NO. 2

# Physician's Alcohol NEWSLETTER



APRIL 1975

## NCA-AMSA conference to feature work in progress

More than 1,200 experts in the field of alcoholism are expected to attend the 1975 National Alcoholism Forum-Annual Conference of the National Council on Alcoholism to be held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, at the Marc Plaza Hotel from April 27 through May 2.

The meeting will be sponsored by the National Council on Alcoholism, its Member Organizations and Component Members. The Milwaukee Council on Alcoholism will be the host organization.

One of the highlights of the Forum will be the 6th Annual Medical-Scientific Conference entitled, "Work in Progress in Alcoholism Research and Treatment." This joint effort by NCA and the American Medical Society on Alcoholism (AMSA) will feature papers by innovative researchers in the areas of (1) biomedicine, metabolism and biochemistry; (2) clinical studies; and (3) psychology and evaluation. The conference will also include: a panel discussion by directors of five research institutes on present activities and over-all objectives; a panel on the newly recognized fetal alcohol syndrome; plenary session "Alcoholism Around the World" with representatives from each continent discussing alcoholism problems and methods of control; medical grand rounds on "Alcoholism and Alcoholic Liver Disease."

Following the 1974 format of allowing eminent authorities of opposing viewpoints to debate timely and crucial issues, the following topics have been chosen for this year's debates: Involuntary Commitment; Primary Prevention; Behavior Modification; Confidentiality of Patients' Records; Laws and Alcohol Use; Alcohol Outlets (bars) in Relation To Alcoholism.

A new and provisional component of the National Council on Alcoholism, the National Nurses Society on Alcoholism (NNSA) will hold its first session entitled "A Perspective: Alcoholism and Nursing."

## 31st International Congress on Alcohol and Drug Problems

### THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES SHARE INTERNATIONAL CONCERN FOR ALCOHOL PROBLEMS AT BANGKOK CONFERENCE

The 31st International Congress on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, held for the first time in Asia, was marked by increasing participation of representatives of Third World countries and a growing concern for alcohol problems in these areas. The theme of the conference, held in Bangkok, Thailand, February 23-28, was "Alcohol-Drugs: Polarisation or Cooperation?"

At the conclusion of the conference, representatives from Southeast Asian countries met for a special 2-day seminar on addictions at Pattaya, Thailand.

Following are brief reports of some of the papers presented at the conference:

### Acetaldehyde levels mark alcoholics

Acetaldehyde reaches higher levels in alcoholics than in nonalcoholics, even when both groups have the same level of alcohol in their blood, says a team of physicians from the Bronx VA Hospital, led by Charles S. Lieber, M.D.

They measured blood acetaldehyde and ethanol levels in 11 subjects, 6 with chronic alcoholism and 5 nonalcoholic controls, after all had been given alcohol intravenously. Despite a progressive fall in blood ethanol over a range of 54 to 33mM, acetaldehyde did not decrease in any of the 11 subjects.

The mean acetaldehyde plateau level was significantly higher in alcoholic than in nonalcoholic subjects. When the mean blood ethanol concentration reached 24 mM, the acetaldehyde plateau ended abruptly in each subject.

The ethanol concentration at which this fall of blood acetaldehyde occurred suggests desaturation of an ethanol oxidizing system other than alcohol dehydrogenase and indicates that at high ethanol blood levels, such a system contributes to ethanol oxidation.

The higher acetaldehyde levels in alcoholism may result from both greater activity in this system and mitochondrial damage, and could contribute to the complications of alcoholism. (*New England Journal of Medicine*, Feb. 20, 1975, pp. 386-89) [Ed. NOTE: With proper instrumentation and standardization this could lead to a good test for alcoholism.]

### Rats drink after stress

Two series of experiments with different strains of rats showed that changes in multiple measures of ethanol intake occurred in 6 of the 8 subjects as a function of repeatedly occurring random shock stress, said Kenneth C. Mills, Ph.D. and John A. Ewing, M.D., of the Center for Alcohol Studies and Department of Psychiatry, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Post-stress ethanol consumption (PSEC) was reflected by increases in the temporal proportion and volume of ethanol freely selected over a water choice to conform to the shock schedule.

Post-shock ethanol consumption was accompanied by strong increases in ethanol preference following shock schedule termination. Predicting the occurrence of the PSEC at increasing concentrations of the ethanol choice solution was possible by examining the absolute volume of ethanol (5% v/v) intake during the pretest baseline.

The repeatability of the post-shock consumption specific to alcohol suggests very strongly that the animals do use the central effects to achieve some measure of stress relief.

### Glial cells more susceptible to effects of ethanol

In amplifying the work of Dr. Ernest Noble, Jan Jarlstedt of the Institute of Neurobiology, University of Goteborg, Sweden, studied the effect of acute alcohol intoxication on neuronal, glial cell,

(Continued on page 4)

## EDITORIAL

### Persistent, Persistent Effort

In one midwestern city, a detoxification center, the only inpatient service for alcoholism, was recently closed for lack of funds. In New York State, 10 inpatient facilities were discontinued, and only total effort on the part of the alcoholism community prevented their closing. In Texas the entire state commission on alcoholism was threatened with obliteration—but again swift action caused its retention. The budgets of the AMA committee on alcoholism (and associated committees on mental health and drug abuse) were cancelled, but because of the response of the community this action was tabled for discussion at the June meeting.

During this time of budgetary limitations, precious advances won after years of effort may well be lost. In addition to working towards new understanding of alcoholism, those knowing the health economics effected by rehabilitating alcoholics instead of junking them should be alert to the possibility of losing past advances.

Another threat has arisen to the separate visibility of alcoholism in the federal health establishment. Hearings have recently been held about the possibility of merging alcoholism with drug abuse in ADAMHA. There are pros and cons about this move.

The recent evaluation of alcohol treatment centers of the NIAAA shows marked improvement for 70% of the clients who persisted in treatment. This demonstrates the worth of any treatment activity.

AMSA members are reminded to be in touch with local alcoholism councils to expand their ability to move in these areas.

—FAS

## BOOKS

**Biomedical Research in Alcohol Abuse Problems. Non-Medical Use of Drug Directorate, National Health & Welfare, Canada. 1975. 411 pp.**

The proceedings of a conference that took place August 29-30, 1974, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, the volume includes papers by eight experts and comments from the participants.

**Resources and Services for Alcoholics. White Plains, N.Y.: Westchester Council on Alcoholism, 1975. 58 pp. \$4.00.**

An updated edition of a directory of alcoholism resources available in the New York metropolitan area. Order from Westchester Council on Alcoholism, 10 Longview Avenue, White Plains, N.Y. 10601.

## Physicians training program opens at Smithers Treatment and Training Center

The Smithers Alcoholism Treatment and Training Center, The Roosevelt Hospital, New York City, is sponsoring a one-month physicians training program in alcoholism.

The tuition-free program is supported by a grant from the Alcoholism Division of the New York State Department of Mental Hygiene and is open to any graduate physician currently working in New York State. The goal is to increase the competency of the physician in the diagnosis and treatment of alcoholism.

The training program is a two-phased experience, the initial phase occurring the first two weeks of each month, January through December. On completion of this phase, the participant elects another two week period to return to the Center for completion of the program. This must be within six months after completion of the first phase. Those physicians who prefer to undertake a full

month of uninterrupted training may do so.

The initial phase orients the physician to detoxification and rehabilitative treatment modalities, and the final two weeks emphasize direct clinical contact under supervision.

The program is an approved course in the Postgraduate Education Program of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University and is approved by the American Medical Association for 140 hours in Category I, Physicians Recognition Award for Continuing Medical Education.

It is under the direction of LeClair Bissell, M.D., and further information can be obtained from George Sweeney, Coordinator of Training, Smithers Center-Roosevelt Hospital, 428 West 59 Street, New York, New York 10019, telephone (212) 554-6725.

## New international journal begins publication

*Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, a new bi-monthly international journal on biomedical and psychosocial approaches, is being published under the auspices of the International Council on Alcohol and Addictions. Manuscripts should be submitted to the editor: Prof. Dr. H. Halbach, c/o ICAA, P.O. Box 140, 1001 Lausanne 1, Switzerland.

The subscription rate is \$44 for institutions, \$21 for personal subscriptions. Sample copies may be obtained from the publishers: Elsevier Sequoia SA, P.O. Box 851, CH-1001 Lausanne 1, Switzerland.

## Rutgers Summer School holds 33rd session

The 1975 Summer School of Alcohol Studies will be held June 22-July 11 at the Center of Alcohol Studies, Rutgers University. The 33rd annual session will feature specialized courses and a strong program of general lectures and special interest seminars.

The Triennial Refresher Course for Alumni of the Summer School of Alcohol Studies will be held July 13-17.

Information can be obtained from Miss Linda Allen, Secretary, Summer School of Alcohol Studies, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J. 08903. Telephone: (201) 932-2190.

## MEETINGS

**MAY**—First Pacific Congress of Psychiatry, Melbourne, Australia. Joint Meeting of the American Psychiatric Association and the Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists. For information, contact Floyd S. Cornelison, Jr., M.D., Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior, Jefferson Medical College, Thomas Jefferson University, 1025 Walnut St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19107.

**JUNE 9-14**—21st International Institute on the Prevention and Treatment of Alcoholism, Helsinki, Finland. Information from ICAA, P.O. Box 140, 1001 Lausanne 1, Switzerland.

**JULY 30-AUGUST 3**—Annual Meeting, International Doctors in AA. The Breakers, Palm Beach, Florida. Contact Information Secretary, IDAA, 1950 Volney Road, Youngstown, Ohio 44511.

**SEPTEMBER 1-5**—Fifth International Conference of the International Association for Accident and Traffic Medicine and the Third International Conference on Drug Abuse. Royal Lancaster Hotel, London. Information from Professor A. Keith Mant, Guys Hospital, London SE 1 9RT.

**OCTOBER 26-NOVEMBER 1**—International Conference on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Sao Paulo, Brazil. Information from ICAA.

## Alcoholism increases danger of burns

Alcoholism was the most prominent predisposing factor among burn-prone individuals, according to a study of 155 adults treated for burns at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital in Boston. John D. MacArthur, M.D., and Francis D. Moore, M.D., who conducted the study, found that the most burn-prone individual is a middle-aged woman alcoholic whose clothing or hair catches on fire while she sits and smokes in an overstuffed chair or in bed. (*Journal of the American Medical Association*, Jan. 20, 1975)

## Alcoholics remember first drink

Despite the deleterious effects of alcohol on memory, alcoholics are clearly superior to nonalcoholics in their ability to remember their first drink. A study conducted at Boston City Hospital by John C. Kuehne, M.D. and William H. Anderson, M.D. of the Department of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School, and Emily Chandler, R.N. of the hospital, matched 20 alcoholics outpatients and a control group of nonalcoholic patients and staff. The addictive group replied in greater detail than the non-addictive group to the circumstances surrounding the first drink. The authors suggest that this difference in recall may be the consequences of a difference in limbic response to challenge with alcohol, and thus provide an anatomic focus for investigation. It may also permit the identification of a group at risk for alcoholism. (*Archives of General Psychiatry*, Vol. 31, October 1974, pp. 521-23)

## Women more susceptible to alcohol than men

Studies at the Oklahoma Center for Alcohol and Drug Related Studies have indicated that women get drunk more easily than men, even when matched for body weight, drinking history, previous food intake, and drinking time. The reason the women reach a higher blood alcohol level and act considerably drunker than men, say Ben Morgan Jones and Oscar A. Parsons, is that a woman's body is made up of about 55-65% water, whereas a man's body is about 65-75% water. A given amount of alcohol is therefore more diluted in a man's body. The menstrual cycle may also affect women's greater susceptibility. Women usually achieved the highest blood alcohol level during the pre-menstrual time.

Data from repeated studies also indicate that alcoholics are just as intelligent verbally as nonalcoholics but that some aspects of their nonverbal, spatial and visual performance is decidedly inferior. This suggests that the usually dominant left hemisphere of the brain, which is primarily responsible for language, suffers less from years of heavy drinking than the right hemisphere. (*Psychology Today*, January 1975, pp. 53-58.)

## NCA Criteria found reliable in U.S. Navy study

The use of alcoholic subtype diagnoses, following the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders was found to add little, if anything, beyond the basic diagnoses of alcoholism outlined

by the NCA Criteria, conclude Marc A. Schuckit, M.D., Special Assistant to the Commanding Officer for Alcoholism Studies, Navy Medical Neuroprotopsycho-atriac Research Unit, San Diego; and E. K. Eric Gunderson, Ph.D., Head of the Epidemiology and Operational Psychiatry Division of the unit, after a research study. (*Diseases of the Nervous System*, December 1974, pp. 563-67.)

## Diphenylhydantoin controls alcohol withdrawal seizures

Patients in a study group of 157 alcoholics who were treated with diphenylhydantoin (330 mg/day) plus sedative doses of chlordiazepoxide, did not have convulsions in the first 48 hours, while 11 patients in the placebo-treated group had convulsions. All patients had a history of convulsions in adulthood. Two patients had convulsions after withdrawal of active drug. The study was conducted by Richard Sampliner, M.D.; and Frank L. Iber, M.D. at Lemuel Shattuck Hospital, Boston (*JAMA*, Vol. 230, No. 10, Dec. 9, 1974, pp. 1430-32.)

## Morphine and lithium suppress alcohol drinking in rats

Regardless of the duration of prior access to alcohol, morphine suppressed alcohol consumption in rats in a study by J. D. Sinclair of the Research Laboratories of the State Alcohol Monopoly, Finland. Food intake was slightly reduced and water drinking increased in groups which had either 1 or 32 days of prior alcohol access. The results suggest that the suppression of alcohol drinking is not dependent on those factors, such as the ability to show an alcohol-deprivation effect, which develop during prolonged access to alcohol. (*Pharmacology Biochemistry and Behavior*, Vol. 2, 1974, pp. 409-12.)

In another study, the author reports that lithium salts suppressed voluntary alcohol drinking by rats regardless of whether it was added to the food or injected. Concomitant water and saccharin solution consumption was not reduced. Alcohol drinking was suppressed during the first 24 hours after lithium administration and throughout the 9 or 30 days of chronic lithium treatment. On the first 2 or 3 days after chronic lithium administration was discontinued, there was an additional decrease in alcohol drinking. (*Medical Biology*, Vol. 52, 1974, pp. 133-36.)

## Physician's Alcohol Newsletter

is published quarterly by the American Medical Society on Alcoholism, Inc., a component of the National Council on Alcoholism. Publication has been made possible by a grant from the Christopher D. Smithers Foundation.

For membership information, contact AMSA at address below.

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# INTERNATIONAL REPORTS FROM BANGKOK CONFERENCE

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and liver proteins in rats. The results showed the *in vitro* incorporation of <sup>3</sup>H-leucine into brain protein was decreased, but the incorporation into liver protein was increased. The reduced incorporation into brain proteins was almost entirely due to inhibition of the incorporation into glial cell protein, since the incorporation into the neuronal fraction was virtually unaffected.

## **Magnesium reduces alcohol consumption in rats**

Rats fed a low magnesium test diet died within three weeks in marked anorexia and rapid loss of weight, while magnesium-treated ones showed excellent survival time, good food consumption and low death rates. Alcohol treatment affected the magnesium-depleted animals even more adversely than the magnesium depletion alone, said F. Martel of Canada. He concluded that supplementing alcohol animals with magnesium salts promotes food consumption, growth rates, and survival times at the same time it significantly reduces ethanol consumption.

## **Enzyme activity examined in alcoholic patients**

5-Enzyme activity in blood serum and cerebrospinal fluid in 47 men and 2 women with Wernicke's hallucinosis, alcoholic paranoia, and depression syndrome showed an increase at the beginning of hospitalization, said A. Bukowczyk et al. of Poland. It was most conspicuous in the group with Wernicke's hallucinosis. With progressive improvement there was a normalization of enzymatic activity in most patients.

## **Ethanol-only reduces intake in rats**

Presentation of ethanol to preferring animals as their only source of fluids tended to reduce subsequent intake in a free-choice situation for an extended period of time, said A. Amit et al. of Canada. In addition, it was found that massing the periods of ethanol presentation (continuous presentation vs. alternate-day presentation) reduced intake in preferring animals. Ingestion of ethanol when another choice of fluid is available and on a periodic basis will maximize intake, while continuous presentation with no other choice of fluids will minimize intake.

The most effective method to abolish ethanol intake in rats seems to be the presentation of an alternative fluid which in itself is very palatable (i.e., a saccharine solution).

## **Ethylene glycol dinitrate reduces ethanol preference in rats**

S. Komura of Japan reported on experiments with rats, in which four compounds—ethylene glycol dinitrate, glyceryl trinitrate, propylene glycol dinitrate, and ethylene glycol mononitrate—caused a marked decrease in ethanol preference. His findings suggest that the decrease and the inhibition of ethanol and acetaldehyde elimination are closely related to the decreases in liver ADH and Ald DH activities in the presence of these four organic nitrates.

## **Cerebral blood flow decreases in chronic alcoholics**

Chronic alcoholism gives rise to a slow decrease in the cerebral blood flow, which apparently is of a diffuse type, D. H. Ingvar of Sweden concluded after regional cerebral blood flow measurements in 62 chronic alcoholics. The reduction of flow corresponds to a proportional reduction of the cerebral oxygen uptake. The findings indicate that chronic alcohol abuse with the ensuing psychiatric symptoms is accompanied by a diffuse encephalopathy which differs from the one present in organic dementia of different etiology.

## **Partners of chronic female alcoholics see themselves as inferior**

After an investigation of the partners of chronic female alcoholics, H. Busch and A. Feuerlein of the Federal Republic of Germany conclude that while the female viewed her impairment by alcoholism realistically, the husband saw himself as less intelligent than his wife. Furthermore, she tended to view him more positively than he did himself. This distortion of interpersonal perception puts him at a disadvantage and is a consequence of his pre-existing inferiority complex.

## **Thai alcoholics' wives no help to husbands**

S. Khwanmitra of Thailand studied 56 Thai wives whose husbands had presented themselves for out-patient psychiatric treatment for alcoholism, especially DT's, at the Army Hospital in Bangkok. The women were mainly 41-50 years old, and married over 20 years. The reason the marriages have remained intact is the presence of children and the Buddhist cultural background of the wives.

Nearly three-quarters of the wives married their husbands when they were already drinking to excess; they either believed it would not be serious or that they could change him. No single type

of personality emerged; most of the wives were submissive and indulging, while a few, mainly professional women, were aggressive and domineering. Only two of the husbands remained abstinent for two years after discharge. The wives seem to have no influence on the outcome of the treatment.

## **Alcohol instruction developed in curriculum of new medical school**

The opening of a new medical school at Brown University presented the opportunity of introducing a comprehensive program of alcoholism instruction into the curriculum rather than having to fit it into an already overcrowded program. D. Mayfield described the program, which presents alcoholism in each of the four years and in as many contexts as possible.

At least one clinician in each specialty area has been engaged so that students can observe alcoholic patients managed appropriately on the surgical service by surgeons, on the medical service by internists, etc. For the series of didactic presentations, cross-discipline teaching is preferred. The consideration of alcoholism at the community level takes place primarily during the students' clerkship in community medicine.

## **Implications of cross-cultural studies for delivery of services**

V. Abad and E. Boyce, of the Spanish Clinic of the Connecticut Mental Health Center, reviewed cross-cultural studies relating to drinking patterns to suggest ways in which cultural phenomena can influence treatment programs. The Spanish Clinic, two years old, emphasizes the need to provide treatment services that are culturally relevant to the expectations of the mostly Puerto Rican population.

## **Urbanization increases drinking in Japan**

Alcohol consumption greatly increased in Japan from 1951-72, a trend more related to urbanization than to economic growth, said A. Nukuda. A remarkable change in the preference of beverages also occurred; while strong traditional shoshu was the first choice in the early postwar period, the preferred drinks in the recent years have been weaker beverages such as sake and beer. From 1966 on, the increase rate in the consumption of traditional sake and shoshu beverages gradually diminished, while the increase rate for foreign-style beverages, such as whisky, beer, or brandy, has continued.

## More reports from Bangkok conference

### Alcoholism and suicide attempts

A random sample of 39 alcoholics who were hospitalized for a suicide attempt were studied by R. Brinkmann and W. Feuerlein of the Federal Republic of Germany. These 39 alcoholics were compared with 40 patients also hospitalized for suicide attempts at the same time. The alcoholics were older than the control group of non-addicted suicidal patients. There was no difference in the seriousness of the attempts, although motivation showed some discrepancies. The alcoholics were suffering mainly from disturbances in psychosocial relations and socioeconomic status, whereas motivation in the control group was dominated by quarrels with some close person.

### New drug improves intellectual performance in alcohol withdrawal

A new drug, UCB 6215, or "piracetam" has been tested in connection with acute alcohol withdrawal, said J. Weckroth of Finland. Repeated trials indicate that a marked improvement may be caused by the critical drug in measurements of intellectual performance during the period of alcohol withdrawal, an improvement which exceeds the normal learning effect and the improvement observed in the control group during the recovery period.

### Alcoholic employee's perception of his treatment referral

M. Heyman of the U.S.A. reported on preliminary results of a two-year project that is the first scientific attempt to study employer-sponsored programs for alcohol abusers in industry. It appears that the particular types of treatment used by the alcohol abusers are not associated with his job improvement. However, the extent to which he uses the particular types of treatment is closely related to his social level. It also appears that the types of incidents which trigger the individual's referral to the program serve to isolate groups with particular characteristics, responses, and degrees of success in the program.

Programs were particularly successful with highly coerced, job-impaired clients who tended to be referred from within the company. Most clients who had improvement state that it started with the first three months of coming to the program.

### Polydrug abuse problem in America

E. Kaufman emphasized the seriousness of the polydrug abuse problem in America, pointing out that many forms



Attentive participants at the 31st International Conference on Alcohol and Drug Problems were (left to right) Kenneth Mills, Ph.D., Frank A. Seixas, M.D. and John A. Ewing, M.D.

of polydrug abuse are so prevalent that the syndrome is frequently less indicative of psychopathology than it was a decade ago. Polydrug abuse habituation is an ominous clinical syndrome which does not respond well to any single treatment modality including psychotherapy, self-help therapeutic community or drug maintenance.

He described the operation of the Lower Eastside Service Center in New York City, which has worked with polydrug abusers for over ten years.

### Adolescent home/school for alcoholic and polydrug abuser in Delaware

A facility which removes the adolescent from a threatening environment, gives him continuous group support, provides a directioned education effort, and counseling and therapy in a 24-hour-a-day school/home atmosphere for a period of at least 12 months is the most desirable setting for young alcoholic and polydrug users, said F. M. Mathews. He outlined the program of such an institution in Delaware. After a psychological and educational profile is completed on each client, he is assigned a "big brother" who serves as an achieving model, and he enters into a tightly structured school/treatment/living situation.

### Brief Reports

- Inderal (propranolol) is a useful addition to the treatment resources in alcohol withdrawal, allowing lower dosage, and earlier termination of other drugs, said L. R. H. Drew of Australia.

- J. S. Madden of the Merseyside Council on Alcoholism, U.K., reports a very favorable recovery rate for alcoholics who enter group counselling with

their spouses, after prior individual counselling.

- Programs for the large, sparsely populated areas of Alberta, Canada, must serve two types of population: the native Indian minority, and the residents of "frontier towns" which contain workers extracting oil from previously untapped sources. E. L. Blumenthal described the Alberta Alcoholism and Drug Commission's method of integrating special programs with other community resources.

- Two surveys, in Helsinki, Finland, 13 years apart, show that 14-year-old boys of today drink more often and in greater quantities than 18-year-old boys in the earlier survey. S. Ahlstrom-Laakso concluded that the increased use of alcohol by young people is correlated with the liberalization of alcohol law.

- A survey of over 2600 adolescents in Bavaria, reported by W. Feuerlein, showed that 53% consumed alcoholic beverages daily or several times a week, 15% regularly consume hard liquors. Most of the regular consumers are boys from urban centers.

- Alcoholics who use a casualty department of a public hospital rather than an outpatient clinic are likely to have fewer social resources, be less motivated for long-term rehabilitation, and have more ongoing acute social problems, according to a study by M. Hamilton et al. of Australia.

- A five-year follow-up of patients from the Donwood Institute, a multi-disciplinary government-supported hospital in Toronto, is currently under way. According to earlier data, says T. Levinson, improvement rates have been consistent: 51% considered recovered, 16% substantially improved, and 33% unchanged.

## PTU reverses alcoholic hepatitis in rats

Evidence that experimental alcoholic hepatitis in rats, the result of an insufficient oxygen supply to meet the increased need produced by the action of alcohol on the liver, can be prevented or reversed by treatment with the antithyroid drug, propylthiouracil (PTU), was presented to the 59th Annual Meeting of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology, April 14, by a group led by Yedy Israel, Ph.D., Harold Kalant, M.D., and James Phillips, M.D. of the University of Toronto School of Medicine and the Addiction Research Foundation.

These findings may have implications for the understanding and management of alcoholic hepatitis in humans.

A consequence of the hypermetabolic condition in the livers of animals consuming alcoholic is that the abnormally high utilization of oxygen would increase the risk that the cells farthest from the blood supply might not get enough oxygen. The liver would then be abnormally sensitive to conditions that reduce delivery of oxygen to the organ, and the most vulnerable cells might die.

In the work described in the papers, three methods of reducing oxygen supply were used, simulating the situation in many human alcoholics in whom lung disease, anemia, and disturbed blood flow in the liver may also contribute to reduced oxygen supply.

Under all three conditions, cells in the central part of the liver lobule, farthest from the blood supply, died; and an inflammatory reaction occurred, giving rise to biochemical and microscopic changes similar in many respects to those found in human alcoholic hepatitis. These changes occurred only in rats which had been fed an alcohol-containing diet.

Under the same conditions, a short period of treatment with PTU prevented the liver damage in the alcohol-fed rats by over 80%. This marked effect was also evident in the animals which had had their hepatic arteries tied off. These animals show severe liver damage for six months or longer, but when they were treated with PTU for a few days the damage was markedly reduced even though they continued to receive the alcohol diet.

## Caron Detoxification Hospital continues founder's work

The Caron Detoxification Hospital in Weinersville, Pennsylvania, opened January 18, 1975, shortly after the death of Richard J. Caron, Founder and Chairman of the Board of Chit Chat Foundation, and Board Member of NCA. PAN joins with others in the alcoholism field in expressing sincere regrets at Mr. Caron's death. His long-time efforts in the field will continue and expand with the new facility at Chit Chat Farms.

## "Near-alcoholism" affects those close to problem drinkers

"Near-alcoholism," a condition that is in effect a nonalcoholic species of alcoholism, affects those close to problem drinkers, including professionals who treat them, according to Barry Leach, Ph.D. Leach described the early and later stage symptoms of "near-alcoholism" at the North American Congress on Alcohol and Drug Problems held in December 1974.

A checklist of feelings and actions has been developed to help near-alcoholics recognize their reactions to the drinker or the drinker's behavior and to seek help for themselves rather than trying to change the drinker.

Leach said that the Al-Anon Family Group program represents the best demonstrable resource for helping victims of near-alcoholism, but Al-Anon is still misunderstood and underutilized.

## Folklore medicine effective among Chicano drinkers

Folklore medicine is effectively used among the Chicano population of northern Mexico and southern Texas to treat alcoholism. At the South Texas Institute of Alcohol and Drug Studies, held March 24-25, at Pan American University, Edinburg, Texas, Bob Trotter showed a film in which native *curanderos*, or healers, treated alcoholic patients by stroking them from head to foot with, consecutively, a lemon, an egg, and the leaf of a sweet basil plant. The patient is reportedly cured in two to three weeks. The cure depends heavily on the patient's faith in the healer.

## Brief reports from Bangkok

- A study of a representative group of 4,000 20-year-old Swiss males indicates that 11.2% are alcohol abstinent; 81.4% drink a weekly amount corresponding to less than 350 g.; 7.4% drink less than 350 g. According to R. Battagay et al., significant statistical connections have been found between the percentages of those who consume the higher rates of alcohol, drugs, and cigarettes and who come from broken homes, and whose parents also use alcohol and drugs.

- As part of a five-year campaign for traffic safety in Sweden, the theme for 1975 is "Drinking and Driving," said Valeri Surrel of Stockholm. The objective is to reduce the number of drunken drivers on the roads in both the short- and the long-term, and the campaign is aimed at both drivers and people in the company of drivers.

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PHYSICIAN'S ALCOHOL NEWSLETTER  
Two Park Avenue  
New York, New York 10016

April  
1975

- More-dependent patients are likely to remain in treatment until the time of scheduled discharge than are the less-dependent patients, according to a study by George R. Jacobson, Ph.D., De Paul Rehabilitation Hospital, Milwaukee.